

NEFAC Aims & Principles

(from the NEFAC Founding Conference August 2000)

The Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists is an organization of revolutionaries coming from different resistance movements who identify with the communist tradition within anarchism. The federation's activities are organized around theoretical development, anarchist propaganda, and intervention in the struggle of our class, be it autonomously or by direct involvement in social movements.

Anarcho-Communism

As anarcho-communists we struggle for a classless and non-hierarchical society. We envision an international confederation of radically democratic, self-managed communities and workplaces. To achieve this society, our class will abolish the wage system and socialize all industries, means of production and distribution. We reject the division of labor that condemns an individual to a life of restricted activity for the sake of the commodity economy. The abolition of markets and exchange value will allow for the satisfaction of human needs, adhering to the communist principle, "From each according to ability, to each according to need."

Capitalism

We seek to abolish all forms of capitalism, whether it be free-market capitalism or so-called "socialist" state capitalism. Capitalism creates a society divided into two antagonistic social classes: a small, elite ruling class and a large, exploited working class. The ruling class owns and controls the means of production and distribution, and are thereby able to monopolize the wealth. Their ownership of these two primary functions in society further enables them to focus production toward their own class interests (commodity production, increased profits, relentless expansion, etc.) without regards for society as a whole. Those of us who are not part of the capitalist ruling class are forced to sell and rent our labor, whether physical or intellectual, for a wage in order to survive. We are trapped in wage slavery.

Class Struggle

There is no one single humanity, there is a humanity of classes. Through inequality, and irreconcilable class interests, an ongoing struggle exists between different social classes. All aspects of modern capitalist society are a direct result of this struggle, developing through centuries of conflict. Anarcho-communism originated and was honed in the every day struggles of the working class against the oppression of class rule.

The State

We are also opposed to all forms of Statism and government. The purpose of any State, whether "representative democracies" or totalitarian dictatorships, is to administrate society in a way that ensures that the privileges of the ruling class are upheld. In order to accomplish this, the State must centralize and monopolize power through a complex network of political, legislative, judiciary, military and financial institutions. This system results in all power being removed from ordinary people, and leads to a society based on hierarchy. By placing itself outside and yet in

control of society, the State negates the social and political potential of society and transforms all logical social functions into bureaucratic State functions.

Patriarchy

Of all oppression in the world, the most entrenched is that of patriarchy, the domination of men over women. This domination expresses itself everywhere -- in both private and public realms. Although it is perpetuated by capitalism and the State, patriarchy existed prior to them and without confrontation will exist beyond their abolition. Anarchist feminism is a theory and practice by which we critique and attack the triple reign of patriarchy, capitalism, and the State, through the realization that this sexual, economic and political subjugation has at its heart the common principle of authority. Only by uniting both the revolutionary class perspective of anarchism and the feminist critique of patriarchy can anarchism and feminism reach their common goal of human liberation. "There will be no revolution without women's liberation. There will be no women's liberation without revolution."

Racism

Exploitation and oppression are also expressed through social inequalities and hierarchies based on race and ethnic origin. Like patriarchy, this form of social oppression is used to divide and weaken the working class and must be opposed at every level. Throughout the history of North America class stratification has been defined, in large part, by race. Although racism is perpetuated by capitalism and class society, it will not necessarily end with the abolition of capitalist social structure. We work to combat racism in all its forms and support those from our class who organize autonomously within the revolutionary movement around specific forms of social liberation.

Queer Liberation

Capitalist patriarchy uses a specific set of gender roles in order to reproduce itself. These expectations breed homophobia and lead to an environment that limits an individual's personal sexual development. We strive for an environment free from oppressive socialization that traps us into a specific sexual identity and lifestyle.

Ecology

Capitalism also threatens the planet with ecological destruction. This only serves to benefit the wealthy elite, while the rest of us must endure the negative consequences. The society we envision is inherently linked to the natural world, where our needs and desires must be realized through ecological sustainability.

Imperialism

Capitalism further endangers the world and humanity through imperialism and its manifestation: war. Imperialism expresses itself in two different manners: one uses brute force through direct state military intervention, while the other uses economic coercion through transnational financial institutions. As anarcho-communists, we are opposed to both forms of imperialism.

National Liberation

We do not support the ideology of national liberation movements, which claims that there are common interests held between the working class and the native ruling class, in the face of foreign domination. Although we support working class struggles against and political and economic imperialism, racism, genocide and colonization, we are opposed to the creation of a new ruling class. We believe that the defeat of imperialism will only come about through a social revolution waged against the imperialists and the local ruling class. This social revolution will have to spread across national borders. We further reject all forms of nationalism as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country, and national boundaries will be eliminated. We must encourage and develop international solidarity which will one day lay the basis for a global social revolution.

Workers Self-Organization

Workers self-organization is essential to social revolution. It originates from the actions and interests of workers, not laws and regulations. The basis of workers organization is direct democracy: in opposition to hierarchy, workers must directly and equally participate in any decision that affects them; direct action: not an appeal to power, but the seizure of power by workers through strikes, slowdowns, sabotage and expropriation; and solidarity: the mutual aid of workers in struggle, to the highest degree possible. In the creation and transformation of these workers organizations we encourage and support maximum tactical flexibility.

Social Revolution

We recognize that any deeply entrenched system based on power and privilege will not allow itself to be peacefully abolished. True liberation can only be attained by social revolution. For us, the concept of a social revolution is not an abstract metaphor, rather, a very real social war against every form of oppression. While we don't fetishize violence or armed struggle, we understand it will require revolutionary force on the part of the working class to bring about social emancipation. Such a revolutionary situation can only emerge from social movements and the autonomous activity of the working class. We advocate radicalization of every struggle. By means of this radicalization and of our involvement in the various resistance movements in which we participate, we encourage the development of an autonomous class consciousness, the only safeguard against political recuperation.

Anarchist Organization

We defend, everywhere and always, the autonomous organization and revolutionary self-activity of the working class. We believe that, if only to wage the battle of ideas, anarchist organizations are necessary. We reject the vision which reduces the idea of revolution to the authoritarian seizure of power by a centralized party believing to be acting in the name of the masses. We know that this vision has led to bloody dictatorships and has nothing to do with socialism. The anarchist organization is neither a party, nor a self-proclaimed vanguard, but an active minority in the working class. It is a rallying point taking part in the theoretical and practical fight against all authoritarian ideology.

Internationalism

We are internationalists based in the northeastern region of North America, and recognize that a social revolution must be global if it is to succeed. We develop and maintain international relationships, solidarity, and discussions to build a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

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The Constitution of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC)

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Preamble

The Northeastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC) is an organization of revolutionary activists from different resistance movements who identify with the communist tradition in anarchism. The activity of the Federation is organized around theoretical development, anarchist propaganda, and intervention in the struggle of our class, be it autonomously or by way of direct involvement in social movements.

Organizational Principles

'Anarchy is organization, organization and more organization'

-Errico Malatesta (1853-1932)

The Federation recognizes that to be efficient, an anarchist organization must adopt a number of organizational principles. The following are those to which we give special importance.

Theoretical and Tactical Unity

Many political tendencies are present within anarchism and this is in part what makes it so rich. Anarchism is not only a question of making the propaganda of ideas, but of action; practice proves that theoretical and tactical unity is necessary. While the Federation does not reject the positive additions that other currents and tendencies have made, both to class struggle and to anarchism, the Federation identifies with anarchist communist principles and organizes on the basis of this specific tradition and program. The document entitled 'Aims and Principles' constitutes the basis of our theoretical and tactical unity.

Because the Federation covers a relatively large geographical territory, encompassing different languages, cultures, legislatures, and activist traditions, the principles of theoretical and tactical unity must apply in a loose manner and can only constitute a general framework guiding member activity.

Federalism and Direct Democracy

Anarchists hold that means must determine ends. The Federation organizes itself according to its ideal of how society as a whole should be organized, namely in a federalist manner and according to direct democracy principles.

Federalism implies that each local group or individual member keeps their organizational and political autonomy; local groups and individual members are the only responsible judges of the way decisions and the general tactical line of the Federation should be implemented. As long as they respect the decision and the position taken by the Federation, the members are totally free to act as they see fit within this framework.

Collective Responsibility

In accepting collective political positions and a determined line of action, it is evident that each member applies them in his or her political work.

It is also evident that no member may act in the name of NEFAC without Federal agreement. If we have agreed on work to be done and on a way to do it, we become responsible, to each other, for its execution. This collective responsibility is nothing more than the collective method of action.

Membership

The Federation recognizes two types of membership - collective and individual. Because the anarcho-communist vision of society and revolutionary activity are in essence fundamentally collective, individual membership can only be seen as a temporary measure. It is the individual's duty to join or form new groups, and the individual will have all the help of the Federation to this end.

Members

A member is defined as any group or individual that agrees with the positions and orientations of the Federation, fulfills the expectations of membership, and has had its candidature accepted by a Federation conference.

Supporter

A supporter is any group or individual who agrees with the positions and orientations of the Federation, but cannot or does not want to fulfill the membership expectations. The supporter's candidature must be accepted by a conference and the supporter must pay annual dues. Right now, the annual dues are \$15 for individuals and \$30 for groups. Dues grant access to all Federation publications.

Member Responsibilities

Revolutionary politics, not being a hobby but a life choice, requires that the members of the Federation agree on the following member responsibilities:

- regularly pay the dues fixed by the conference (note that as of August 2000 the annual due is \$25US per member);
- contribute to the collective theoretical development of the Federation (members are encourage to organize at least one large and open study group or seminar a year; the Federation pledges to distribute the study material produced by member groups);
- contribute to the collective anarchist agitation and propaganda of the Federation, notably by the distribution of agitational and propagandist material produced by the Federation, and by the regular organization of lectures and by writing articles for the Federation press (the Federation pledges to produce agitational and propagandist material and to distribute the material produced by the groups; the Federation also pledges to organize a list of available lecturers, lecture subjects and organize propaganda tours);
- intervene in the class struggle, either in an autonomous manner or by an active presence in the social movements (every member of the Federation is therefore involved, at one level or another, in the class struggle; while giving a priority to local intervention, the Federation will organize international interventionist campaigns in the class struggle);
- participate as individuals, when possible and practical, in at least one of the Federation's working committees and groups; individuals should also pledge to coordinate a working committee or assume one of the federal duties at least once every three years;
- regularly participate in the conference and in the meetings of other Federation bodies (for its part, the Federation will put in place a system to equally share the fees associated with the organization and the costs related to participation in these meetings - see article 4a);
- regularly inform the Federation as a whole of the development of your activity by the means of a short monthly report sent to the discussion list and a more detailed report every three months; mandate one recallable spokesperson from the local group to participate in the federal council.

Adhesion Process

If only for security reasons, we cannot accept just any one in the Federation or in just any way. There are two forms of the adhesion process.

- i) *Collective*. Any anarchist group (consisting of at least three active members) that agrees with the position and orientations of the Federation can apply for membership.

To do this, the group must send a written request of adhesion to the coordinating committee. Upon receiving the request, the group will become a supporter group; it will have three months to prove it can fulfill its member responsibilities. At this time, the Federal council will decide whether or not to admit the group as a full member. At the next conference, full membership will be voted upon by the conference.

ii) *Individual*. In general, individuals join member groups of the Federation and every member of these groups is automatically considered a member of the Federation without other formalities. But if this is impossible, any person who agrees with the positions and orientations of the Federation can still ask to join.

To do this, the individual must send a written request of adhesion to the federal executive. If his or her request is accepted, the individual will then become a supporter and the federal executive will put him or her in contact with the closest group. The group will then decide what follows.

If there is no nearby group or if the closest group refuses any new adhesion, the same process as with groups that ask to join will apply.

Expulsion and Resignation

Resignation: any member who chooses not to fulfill the member responsibilities for more than three consecutive months is believed to have resigned. The member will be contacted by the federal executive to be informed that if he or she does not rectify the situation within a set period of time, he or she will lose member status. Members can also signify their resignation from the Federation by writing, however dues will not be reimbursed. It is up to each group, if only to adjust its level of dues, to inform the federal executive of any resignations.

Expulsion: any member who breaks, in a serious way, with the minimal activist ethic or breaks the contract that unites Federation members by actions that go against Federation principles, can be expelled. The process is the same as with adhesion, that is, the facts are brought to the attention of the coordination committee, which issues a suspension motion. An expulsion motion will be sent to the next conference; the motion must explain the reason why the expulsion is required. The member can then come and defend his or her point at the conference, and a decision will be made. Any member of the forces of repression, any collaborator with the forces of repression, any person who joins the Federation with hostile motives, will automatically be expelled without any other formality. In such a case, the person will still be free to come and explain him or herself to a conference and ask again to join the Federation if they judge that the coordination committee or the group that asked for their expulsion was wrong in doing so. It is up to the groups to define their means of expulsion.

Federal Structures

The Federation's working principles are direct democracy and federalism. This means that every decision is taken after debate at a conference, by a vote when necessary (on the principle of 'one member, one vote') and by consensus most of the time.

Every decision made in a conference is final, immediately applicable, and binding to the

Federation membership. Only a new conference can reverse a decision made that way. Every working policy and way of functioning of the organization is adopted at conferences and therefore applies to all.

Anarchists know too well that the presence of a majority and a minority does not necessarily mean that the majority is right and the minority wrong. That's why any anarchist organization should favor a process that permits a minority that, while still being bound to decisions taken by the organization, defends its point of view to the organization even if this viewpoint has been overruled in a conference. In our case, the internal bulletin and the electronic discussion list exist precisely to this end. In any case, an anarchist organization must promote an environment where sectarianism is discouraged and dialogue is encouraged, an environment where the atmosphere of true camaraderie reigns.

The Conference

The conference is the highest decision making body of the Federation is the conference, which is composed of every member of the Federation, its supporters, and the observers invited to the conference. During the conference, only the members have the right to vote and to present some propositions, but the supporters have the right to speak, and an indicative right to vote and will not be excluded in case of a closed meeting. A quorum of 50% of all the members + 1 is necessary for the conference to be a decision-making conference (this rule applies to all the bodies of the Federation). Each member may vote as an individual or by proxy.

The conference is a place to discuss the analysis of the conjuncture, [which Webster's defines as both the 'state of being conjoined' and 'the combination of circumstances or events usually producing a crisis: juncture.' Definition added for clarity, or do we want to mystify? LB] The conference opens with a detailed report of the activity of each committee of the Federation and of each member group. The conference adopts the positions and orientations of the Federation, the general tactical line, and the action plan.

The conference meets at least once a year in a place determined by the previous conference. The process to call a conference is as follows:

Four months before the chosen date for the conference, a special committee is formed to prepare the conference. This committee will have the responsibility to produce four issues of a special monthly bulletin. The aim of this bulletin will be to share the analysis of different members, to report activity, and to start the discussion on a draft of action plans, positions, and orientations. This bulletin will only be sent to members and supporters. The issue published after the conference will comprise all the texts adopted during the conference and will be distributed to any person or group who wishes to know more about the Federation.

Holding regular conferences generates various fees, which can be relatively high and can eventually discourage participation in these meetings. That's why the Federation adopts the following way to share the fees. First, registration fees will be charged to all participants to cover the costs of the organizing committee (production of documents, renting of rooms, food, etc.). Then, at the end of the conference, members and supporters will share the traveling cost; that is,

they will add all of their bills and will divide them by the number of participants. The goal is to share the costs in an egalitarian manner so that it doesn't cost more to those who live farther away from the meeting place. Of course we expect everyone to organize to reduce costs to a minimum!

In case of emergency, or if one-third of the members petition for it, the federal executive must call a special conference. A call is then sent to all members and sympathizers; this call must be composed of a text explaining the reason for the special conference and an agenda that has only one item, the reason for the call. This call must be sent 14 days before the date of the special conference. If this delay is too long (in case of a declaration of war or a coup d'etat for example), it is also possible to call, within 72 hours, a meeting of mandated group delegates who, in this exceptional circumstance, have full power, but whose decision must be ratified at a latter normal conference.

The Federation Council

The federation council is composed of a single recallable mandated spokesperson from each member group. The federal council exists to make administrative and executive decisions between conferences. Decisions may be made by spokespersons representing a quorum of members of the federation, and tallying votes on a one member/one vote basis.

The federation council is an ongoing discussion, through whatever communication means are available (internet, postal mail, telephone, etc.) Each member group must mandate one recallable spokesperson to participate in the Federal Council. The coordinating committee, upon receiving a request for group membership, includes the group as a supporter. After three months, the federal council can accept the group as a member on a probationary basis. At the next conference, there is a vote on final adhesion of the new group.

The Coordinating Committee

The aim of a Coordinating Committee is to administer the Federation between conferences. It is composed of two secretaries, one English-speaking and one French-speaking, both designated by the conference. There are seven positions to fill - two internal relations secretaries, two international relations secretaries, two treasurers, and one person responsible for the electronic discussion list. The Coordinating Committee, among other things, executes mandates given to it by the conference; regularly produces an internal bulletin in both languages of the Federation; monitors payment of dues and the administration of Federation funds; ensures that the Federation maintains good international relations.

The Coordinating Committee has no power to make political initiatives; any decision that is not strictly administrative or executive must be made by the members who will be able to express themselves on these questions through the internal bulletin or the discussion list.

Working Committees

When necessary, the Federation conference creates working committees and mandates comrades for the realization of special projects. These committees are bound by the same rules as other purely executive committees and the delegations, namely that comrades be given clear mandates and that the comrades who perform these mandates are revocable at any moment. Without

making it a formal rule, the Federation favors the rotation of tasks.

Internal Bulletin and Electronic Discussion List

To ensure good internal communication, the Federation produces an internal bulletin and an electronic discussion list. The aims of these tools are to ensure a lively and constant debate, and to forward information to members. To this end, members and supporter groups should distribute, on a monthly basis, a short report of their activity and, on a three-month basis, a more detailed one. The internal bulletin (except in the case of the special conference bulletin) is only sent by post to members and supporters who don't have access to the internet. The bulletin will be published every other week and will be composed of all the texts that were distributed on the electronic discussion list.

Language Policy

Because the Federation is composed of members from both French-speaking and English-speaking communities, all the official documents of the Federation, all the proposals and pre-conference material must be available in both languages. It is up to each group to distribute the information in the appropriate language. The dues paid by each language community must be used to generate propaganda in the language of the local population.